



NEWS

FILE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LUTHERAN, CATHOLIC DIALOGUE URGES JOINT COMMEMORATION OF ST. FRANCIS

WASHINGTON--Lutheran and Roman Catholic bishops, who last year successfully joined forces to promote mutual observances of the 450th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, have adopted a resolution encouraging joint participation in the 800th anniversary of the birth of St. Francis of Assisi.

The resolution was made public at the conclusion of the seventh annual meeting of Lutheran and Catholic Bishops here. The two-day meeting (Oct. 20-21) was held at the secretariat of the Catholic Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs. The resolution said in part:

Roman Catholic and Lutheran bishops encourage parish and regional groups of Roman Catholics and Lutherans to study the life and ministry of St. Francis, especially as these apply to the mission of the Church in our world, and to join together in the commemoration of the 800th anniversary of his birth, during 1981-1982.

At their meeting, the bishops reflected on the reports which they have received indicating a high degree of Catholic-Lutheran cooperation at all levels in last year's commemoration of the Augsburg Confession, the major working document of the Lutheran position. They noted that study

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groups between Lutheran and Catholics were established, joint celebrations were held, and that many published items appeared. Similar things happened worldwide.

"The bishops were pleased at this response to their encouragement of such ecumenical celebrations, and especially at the closer relationships which they have brought about," they said in a joint communique. "They were concerned that what has been gained not fall into neglect."

The bishops also examined the statement of the Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) which reflects upon the Augsburg Confession celebration, and received with gratitude affirmative statements which have been made by Pope John Paul II and Jan Cardinal Willebrands. The LWF statement noted the increasing convergence between the two world communions and encouraged the deepening of "our lived communion."

Looking ahead to 1983, the bishops advised their staffs to initiate work toward the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther. They encouraged the bishops of both communions to explore various possibilities of joint observance.

The Lutherans present at this session of the Lutheran and Catholic Bishops meeting were Dr. David W. Preus, President, American Lutheran Church; Dr. James R. Crumley, President, Lutheran Church in America; Dr. H. George Anderson, President, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Columbia, and Co-Chairman of

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the U.S. Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue; Rev. Paul M. Orso, Maryland Synod, LCA; Rev. E. Harold Jansen, Eastern District, ALC; Dr. Paul A. Wee, General Secretary, Lutheran World Ministries; Dr. Eugene Brand, Director, Office on Studies, Lutheran World Ministries; Dr. Joseph Burgess, Division of Theological Studies, Lutheran Council in the USA; Dr. George Lindbeck, Yale Divinity School; and Dr. William Rusch, staff member of the Lutheran Church in America.

Roman Catholics present were Bishop Ernest L. Unterkoefler of Charleston, Chairman of the BCEIA; Auxiliary Bishop T. Austin Murphy of Baltimore, Co-Chairman, U.S. Catholic-Lutheran Dialogue; Archbishop John F. Whealon of Hartford; Bishop Joseph G. Vath of Birmingham; Coadjutor Bishop Raphael M. Fliss of Superior; Auxiliary Bishop William H. Keeler of Harrisburg; Fathers Carl J. Peter and Avery Dulles of the Catholic University of America; and staff to the BCEIA secretariat, Fathers John F. Hotchkin and Joseph W. Witmer. Another Catholic member of the dialogue, Bishop John N. Wurm of Belleville, was unable to attend.

This is the text of the resolution which the Lutheran and Catholic bishops commended to their respective constituencies:

- Whereas: - the life and ministry of St. Francis of Assisi have been an inspiration for the entire Christian community
- his advocacy of peace his teaching on poverty and riches, and his concern for God's creation are themes of crucial importance for Christian life today

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- his radical commitment to the teaching of Jesus contributed to a revitalization of the Church of his day, putting him in the line of renewers of the Church throughout the ages

Resolved: - that Roman Catholic and Lutheran bishops encourage parish and regional groups of Roman Catholics and Lutherans to study the life and ministry of St. Francis, especially as these apply to the mission of the Church in our world, and to join together in the commemoration of the 800th anniversary of his birth, during 1981-1982.

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